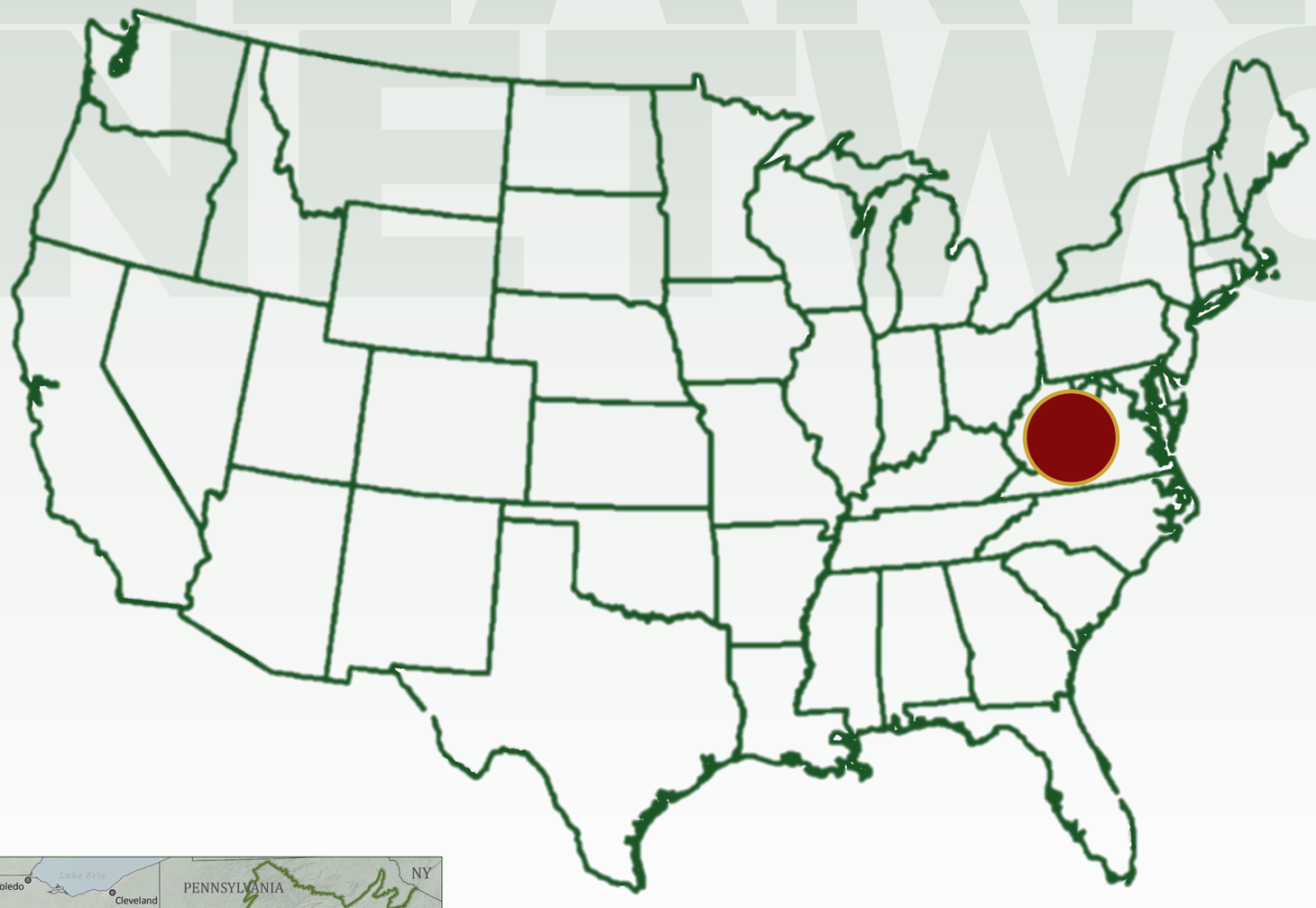
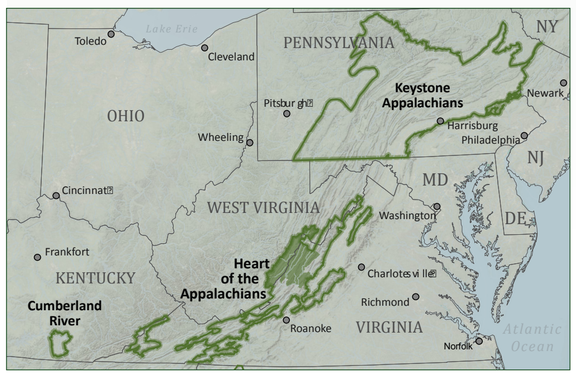
Central Appalachians FLN



Partner Agencies & Organizations

Arcadia University
Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists
Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Kentucky Division of Forestry
National Park Service—Shenandoah National Park
National Weather Service
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at Fort Indiantown Gap
Pennsylvania Game Commission
Radford University
The Nature Conservancy—Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia
University of Kentucky
University of Tennessee
U.S. Geological Survey—Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
USDA Forest Service—Daniel Boone, George Washington and Jefferson, and Monongahela National Forests
USDA Forest Service—Northern Research Station
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation—Natural Heritage
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation—State Parks
Virginia Department of Forestry
Virginia Tech
West Virginia Department of Forestry
West Virginia Department of Natural Resources
West Virginia University



Success in Restoring Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

In the eight years since the Central Appalachians FLN was formed, the growth in both diversity and strength of our partnership has been key to restoring the role of fire at an ecologically meaningful scale. Increased communication and coordination has resulted in nearly all controlled burns being conducted by four or more partners regardless of land ownership. Completion of memorandums of understanding between founding and new partners has enabled treatments to expand into additional geographies and directed significant funding towards our restoration efforts.

Recent Highlights

Significant progress has been made in all FLN landscapes to implement an effectiveness monitoring program. Members of the Monitoring Working Group in the Heart of the Appalachians landscape revised their forest structure and composition monitoring protocol and data forms and developed standardized data entry templates to facilitate more user-friendly data entry into an integrated database. As a result, most of the information from pre- and post-burn visits to the 333 macroplots monitored by TNC and the George Washington and Jefferson NFs are now entered into a single database. On the Daniel Boone NF, the Stearns and London Ranger Districts installed 40 new vegetative monitoring plots across their landscape. And in Pennsylvania, TNC and the Pennsylvania Game Commission contracted with Arcadia University to provide fire effects monitoring for their growing program.

Beyond Our Borders

Ground-based protocols and remote sensing tools developed by The Nature Conservancy and the George Washington and Jefferson NFs have been shared with the Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (CNFLRI) as its steering committee considers recommendations for a fire effects monitoring program. Our analysis of successional classes and canopy gaps formed by controlled burns using Rapid Assessment of Vegetation Condition after Wildfire imagery, the Composite Burn Index and National Agriculture Imagery Program aerial photography proved most informative. Interestingly, it was lessons learned from the CNFLRI's own ecological departure analysis that lead us to employ these methods for a project-level analysis on the GWNF.

Left: USFS crew members on fireline patrol at the 2014 Blue Suck burn at Douthat State Park in Virginia © TNC/Sam Lindblom
Center: 2011 Claytor Lake State Park prescribed fire © VA State Parks
Right: 2013 Scotia Unit burn in Pennsylvania © TNC/Jennifer Case

Looking Forward

The Monongahela and Daniel Boone NFs recently received funding from the Forest Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership, in part due to established FLN partnerships. This funding will help restore historic fire regimes through the use of controlled burns, complete fuel reduction treatments in priority wildland-urban interface, and engage landowners in creating fire resilient communities. The initiative also brings the NRCS—a key player—to the FLN partnership, which will help facilitate increased collaboration with private landowners and speed progress towards an all-lands conservation approach.

Meeting Local Challenges

Increasing staff capacity and expanding the number of personnel with specialized qualifications have long been objectives of this FLN. To help address this, in March we hosted the first eastern U.S. prescribed fire training exchange (TREX). Participants from TNC, Forest Service, NPS, USFWS and several state agencies—and from as far as Arizona—who attended this event got valuable experience while assisting partners across Virginia to complete moderate complexity controlled burns in both southeastern pine savannas and Appalachian hardwood forests.

Forest structure and composition monitoring © TNC/Nikole Swaney

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The Fire Learning Network is supported by Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration: Landscapes, Learning and Restoration, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.
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